

## Ship Loads Food, Drugs To Ransom Cuba Captives

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By HELEN DELICH BENTLEY  
[Maritime Editor of The Sun]

Port Everglades, Fla., Dec. 20—Loading of the first foodstuffs and medicines to be used for ransom of 1,113 Castro prisoners began this afternoon aboard the S.S. African Pilot as James B. Donovan, chief negotiator, and Dr. Leonard Scheele, former surgeon general of the United States, returned to Cuba to complete the negotiations.

Dr. Scheele is reported to have accompanied Donovan to explain to Premier Fidel Castro how the vast amounts of medicines best could be used to help his people.

Donovan had returned to Miami for only fourteen hours before taking off again. He reportedly had certain matters to take up here with the families of the prisoners who had been taken in the Bay of Pigs invasion of April, 1961, before he could make his bargain with Castro final.

### Release By Sunday Seen

All indications here are that the prisoners could still be back by Sunday night after the shipload of ransom—valued at \$53,000,000—arrives in Havana harbor, fifteen sailing hours away.

The medicines and foodstuffs—contributed by industries and manufacturers to the American Red Cross, which is coordinating all activities—are going aboard the African Pilot, which was quickly reactivated in Baltimore last weekend to serve as the "mercy ship."

When the African Pilot sails out of Port Everglades—the port area between Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood—she will have two large red crosses painted on either side.

Her sailing time not only will hinge on the completion of negotiations but also the receipt of all of the 3,000 tons of medicines and foodstuffs that are supposed to make up the shipment.

### 250 Tons On Hand

Only 250 tons of medicines and foodstuffs were on hand at 2:10 P.M. when longshoremen began loading the first pallets aboard. Only 200 tons more are expected to come in during the night.

Eleven of 80 railroad car loads have arrived, while the others

are en route from all over the United States.

The rest is being flown into Opa-Locka airport by commercial airlines and then trucked from the military air base to Port Everglades terminal.

All of the transportation is being contributed by the various companies involved.

The first pallet of cargo to be lifted aboard the American-flag ship consisted of orange and cherry "Vita drink." After several loads of the soft drink, a shipment of baby food—creamed peas and potatoes—was carried out of the warehouse by lift trucks. Inside the warehouse were stacks of liquid diet food and a drug named Ilosone.

### Maximum Security

Maximum security has been placed around the ship and pier where loading is under way to prevent any anti-Castro Cubans from stowing away on the freighter.

About 58 longshoremen were working this afternoon, although sixteen gangs have been ordered to stand by and be ready for round-the-clock loading as needed.

Most of the crew members aboard the ship are from Baltimore, where the freighter was in the process of being deactivated when a call for a "ready vessel" was sent out. Because the African Pilot had been in the process of being prepared for the reserve fleet for only a few hours, she was able to be taken out of drydock and rapidly readied for an unusual final voyage.

The C-2 freighter is being traded in by Farrell Lines to the United States Maritime Administration on newer and bigger ships.

The unions provided the men as soon as they were called upon to do so. These include the National Maritime Union, the National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots, and the Radio Officers Union.

The local longshoremen belong to the International Longshoremen's Association.